

Flathead



Flathead Job Service Employers' Committee

October 19, 2006 – Flathead Workforce Center

Attending

Members: Bill Nelson, Virginia Sloan, Mora McCarthy, Pat Hulla, *FJSWC*; Kris Carlson, Chair, *A Plus Health Care, Inc.*; Patti Gregerson, *Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce*; Susie Burch, *FVCC*; Shannon Brittingham, *Putnam & Associates*, Pat Wilson, *KRMC*; Mary Anne Miles, *Total Label*, Terry Mitton, *City of Kalispell*; Loren Sallee, *Loren's Auto Repair*; Lori Ann Sullivan, *TeleTech*; Debbie Biggar, *Flathead Electric*; Allen Whitehead, *CFAC*; Margaret LeKander, *Wheaton's Cycle*;

Guests: Barbara Bennett, *Montana West Economic Development*, Tammi Rardon, *Denman Construction*;

Guest Speakers: Flathead Area Young Professionals (FAYP) - Janice Lake, *Mann Mortgage*; Tyler Bebee, *D.A. Davidson*, Heidi Borg, *Kandahar Lodge*

Called to Order

Meeting called to order by Chair, Kris Carlson. Introductions. Kris welcomed new members and guests

Guest Speakers

The Flathead Area Young Professionals reported on their August trip to the 3RD Annual YP (Young Professionals) Summit 2006 in Madison, WI. They thanked the committee for their financial contribution to help defray expenses. The committee appreciated their enthusiasm and energy for building a community that is attractive to next generation talent. They shared a recent article out of the October issue of *The Economist: The Search for Talent & The Battle for Brainpower*.

Treasurer's Report

Margaret reported the checkbook balance: \$3193.65

New Business

Current Labor Market Trends: Bill reported on current labor market trends. September's labor force statistics are not out yet. For August 2006, Montana had a workforce of 510,700 and an UI rate of 2.9%. 14,910 people were unemployed with 495,790 employed. The Flathead County has a labor force of 46,534 with 45,262 employed and 1272 or 2.7% unemployed. Bill also shared information on the Flathead County Fact Sheet from the U.S. Census Bureau. He also reported on an article from MSNBC that reported 650 economists who called for an increase to the minimum wage. They disagreed with critics of a minimum wage increase who contend that a higher minimum wage would lead employers to cut jobs or move them offshore, saying that an increase in the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour would have a positive effect on the economy. He also passed out an article from the June Montana Economy at A Glance; "Wages for Continuous Single and Multiple Jobholders in Montana". He mentioned the Building Blocks series has been very successful with an average attendance of 25. We just had the 6th in the 12-week series. Today's session was on employee retention.

Virginia reported that Brad Eldredge, Economist for the MT Dept of Labor, Research & Analysis, shared his perspective of the Flathead Economy:

"I guess a low unemployment rate isn't the worst problem you could have. Our latest county level employment data shows that Flathead's job growth is still strong. Your non-farm wage and salary employment (jobs covered by UI) was up 5.8% from 1st quarter 2005 to 1st quarter 2006. This compares to

3.4% growth for the state (which is also really good by historical standards.). Your annual wage 2nd quarter 2005 thru 1st quarter 2006 was \$28,915, which was up 5.8% over the preceding year. This was almost identical to the statewide wage increase of 5.7%. Inflation over the same period was up 3.5%. Your average wage is about the same as the statewide wage (28,915 in Flathead vs. 29,644 statewide). In terms of where the growth is occurring, construction is still the biggest player. This sector added 563 jobs in Flathead County (2006 1st quarter over 2005 1st quarter) an increase of 15.3%. I think of it as you guys "exporting" your beautiful surroundings and great quality of life by attracting so many new residents, which fuels your construction industry and brings a lot of new dollars into your economy. The biggest risk to your economy right now may well be a slowdown in housing activity, although that is probably diminished by recent bad news on the national economy, which probably precludes further interest rate increases at least in the near term."

The committee would like to have Brad make another presentation to the Flathead business community. The advocates will extend an invitation and arrange a seminar or similar event in 2007.

Program Review:

Mora reported that the *Brown Bag Series: Blueprint for Business Success & Building Blocks to Strengthen Your Business* have been well received and continue to have strong attendance. Tammi Rardon, Denman Construction, has attended most of these events and shared her perspective. She is pleased to have the opportunity to learn human resource tools at these events and shared the value of networking with other employers and sharing perspectives.

JSEC Seminar: *Creating a Culture to Attract and Keep Your Best Employees*, Monday, October 30, 2006. The seminar is filling quickly and JSEC was reminded that the profits from these events allow JSEC to fund and support events such as the Flathead Area Young Professionals.

Training Updates

Flathead Area Young Professionals (FAYP) Retreat: FAYP is planning a retreat October 29th at the Kandahar Lodge in Whitefish, to discuss how to make the Flathead a **Community of Choice** for young people and how to actively involve businesses in the valley. Anyone interested please visit the group's website at www.faypsite.com for more information.

Non-Profit Development Partnership (NpDP): is offering a **free** seminar for board members of local nonprofits entitled *Board Service: Putting Passion into Practice*, Thursday, November 2nd, 2006, 5:00 - 8:00 pm at The Central School Museum, Kalispell. Staff members are welcome to accompany their board representatives. For more information and to RSVP by October 31st: 755-1135 or flatheadlincolnnpdp@hotmail.com

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday, November 16, 2006 from 1pm to 2:30 pm. We will meet at the Flathead High School and Dan Zorn, Asst. Superintendent of Schools will tour the committee through the Information Technology classes. Members are encouraged to bring guests and/or their IT departments to connect with the students and workforce of tomorrow.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.